



Council President Pro Tem Kevin L. Faulconer
Inauguration Address
District 2
December 6, 2010

Before I get started, I need to say several thank yous, starting with my wife, Katherine, and our children, Jack and Lauren.

I wouldn't be here today without your love and support. Thank you!

I also want to thank my mom and dad, my stepfather, and the rest of my family and friends. I need to thank my City Council colleagues – old and new – the Mayor, City staff and my District Two team.

I thank the strong coalition of neighbors, public safety, employee and business groups that joined together to support my reelection. I owe each of you a hearty thank you.

And finally, I thank the residents of District 2. I am grateful to have your support and confidence.

As your Councilmember, my mission is clear: To passionately guard San Diego's tax dollars, protect our beaches and bays and provide effective, consensus-driven neighborhood and citywide leadership – and to do so transparently, ethically and with results for the citizens of San Diego.

I am honored to represent District 2, which includes the City's bays, most of its beaches, historic neighborhoods rich with character, and the vibrant urban core. It is truly the heart of our city.

I am proud of the accomplishments we have achieved together since you first elected me in 2006.

Of the many achievements, those that stand out include breaking ground on a new main library, opening the 46-acre NTC Park, establishing the Mission Hills historic districts, bringing curbside recycling to Mission Beach, preventing the closure of the Ocean Beach library and repairing 72 miles of streets in our communities.

Fighting for my neighborhoods also means tackling Citywide issues that benefit all San Diegans. Since I took office, there have been six significant proposals on the ballot that were important to District 2 and the City as a whole.

I championed five of those ballot proposals, all of which voters supported.

The Mission Bay Park protection measure; alcohol-free beaches and bays; strengthening the City's audit functions; allowing managed competition and making the City's Strong Mayor Form of Government permanent.

I campaigned strongly against one ballot measure, which voters rejected – Proposition D.

In overwhelmingly rejecting this sales tax increase last month, voters delivered a clear message: City Hall must live within its means. We must continue to change the way we do business.

To accomplish this, San Diego needs strong leadership, and I've sought to lead by example – by standing up to fight for what's right, even when it may be unpopular.

When I first took office, many thought the problems at City Hall seemed insurmountable.

The City had no audited reports, a suspended credit rating, was frozen out of the capital markets, and placed under a Cease and Desist Order by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

My task was clear: To rebuild San Diego's finances and begin to regain the trust of taxpayers.

As chairman of the City's first-ever Audit Committee, we have led the way in making San Diego the benchmark for disclosure and transparency.

The very basics of the City's system were broken. We had an auditor that audited the same books he kept, and had to answer to the people that set his budget.

We solved this by literally rewriting the City Charter through a vote of the people.

Now, we have an independent City Auditor who operates under a separate branch of government and reports directly to the Audit Committee. For the last two years the City has had a team of watchdog auditors that have found three dollars in savings for every dollar we have invested in them.

These changes have built a system of checks and balances to ensure accountability and prevent financial problems from being swept under the rug.

We caught up on five years of backlogged audits, allowing San Diego to regain its credit ratings and re-enter the bond market, saving taxpayers millions of dollars and closing a dark financial chapter for the City.

While we've clearly made strides, our work is not done. In the upcoming year, the City is facing a significant budget shortfall.

As we work to face this challenge head on and balance the budget, I want to make one point very clear: I will not vote to lay off police officers or firefighters.

Public safety is the number one role of government, and nothing should stand in the way of that. In fact, we must go one step further and examine every option to end rolling brownouts.

We can do this!

In the upcoming year, we can save tens of millions of dollars if we take decisive action, including:

- Getting out of the landfill business and competitively bidding our information technology contracts;
- Permanently reducing retiree health care costs; and
- Unleashing the efficiencies and creativity of the private sector by finally starting managed competition and fulfilling the will of San Diego voters.

The tax dollars hard-working San Diegans send to City Hall must be spent wisely.

That is why I am proud to be spearheading an effort with Mayor Sanders that will end the pension system as we know it.

This groundbreaking ballot measure asks San Diego voters to replace pensions for new general member hires and elected officials with a 401(k)-style plan. We must have a system that is fair to employees but affordable to San Diego taxpayers.

I've listed several of the reforms we've made since I took office. Ladies and gentlemen, this would be the biggest reform yet. And it has already come under significant fire by those who seek to continue the status quo.

The status quo is broken.

This is a bold move for our city, but if a 401(k)-style plan works for businesses everywhere, it can – and will – work here.

Let me be clear: City employees did not cause this problem, and you will not hear me say that they are to blame. But we must change this system because an unaffordable benefit is not a benefit at all.

In order to cross the finish line, we must complete these reforms.

Today we have an opportunity.

Today we have a new City Council and a mandate from voters to work together to make the tough decisions to fix City Hall.

Today we have the opportunity to rethink the way the City delivers services and have City departments compete against the private sector to permanently lower costs.

Today we have a choice: we can stand still; we can fight the same battles of the past; or we can seize this moment and deliver the change we have been elected to bring.

I hope you will join me in moving forward. I am optimistic about the future, and that we can finish the job we have started.

To the people of San Diego and of District Two, I recommit that I will:

- Work passionately to make government work for all San Diegans;
- Protect San Diego's beaches, bays, clean air and quality of life for residents, visitors and future generations; and
- Guard San Diego's tax dollars so we can deliver quality city services in all of our neighborhoods.

Every day, I'm working with all of you – neighbors, families, community leaders and small business owners – to solve problems and deliver results.

Thank you for supporting me and giving me four more years to serve as your City Councilmember.